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Today

42°

Monday

40° 30°

Tuesday

47° 35°

Wednesday

45° 40°

Thursday

45° 37°

Eugene: **41°F**, [mostly cloudy, light rain](#)

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## Better Business Bureau asked to alter ratings rule

### Connecticut's attorney general says the consumer organization's letter grades are a pay-to-play system

By Stephanie Reitz

The Associated Press

Published: **Saturday**, Nov 13, 2010 05:01AM

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HARTFORD, Conn. — Connecticut's attorney general is pushing the Better Business Bureau to stop what he calls a pay-to-play system that gives its members a ratings boost over nonmembers.

Richard Blumenthal, who will soon leave his state job to replace Christopher Dodd in the U.S. Senate, sent a letter Friday to the Council of Better Business Bureaus, based in Arlington, Va., about its letter grade system, a method it adopted last year in place of the previous satisfactory/unsatisfactory ratings.

He said his review found that BBB members' grades include extra points unavailable to nonmembers, a practice he called unfair to consumers who assume the companies are being judged equally.

Blumenthal wants the organization to either stop linking ratings to membership or, failing that, to tell consumers when a company's grade was influenced by joining the BBB. Dues range from a few hundred dollars to more than \$5,000, depending on a business' size.

"This financial influence is potentially harmful and misleading to consumers," said Blumenthal, who wants the group to change its rating system by mid-December.

Alison Southwick, spokeswoman for the national BBB, said its officials have been talking with Blumenthal and believe they can satisfy his concerns.

"We disagree with his characterization that BBB does not adequately disclose the fact that accredited businesses financially support BBB," she said. "However, we are always interested in hearing from our partners in consumer advocacy, and are pleased to accept constructive feedback from his office and other consumer advocates."

Blumenthal's letter came as ABC News reported that it was airing an investigation Friday on its "20/20" news magazine program into BBB ratings.

The network said it had videotaped instances in which two Los Angeles business owners were promised, and later given, A-plus ratings if they paid \$395 membership fees. ABC also reported that a group of Los Angeles business owners paid \$425 to join the BBB as a fake company called Hamas — named after the Islamic militant group — and secured an A-minus grade.

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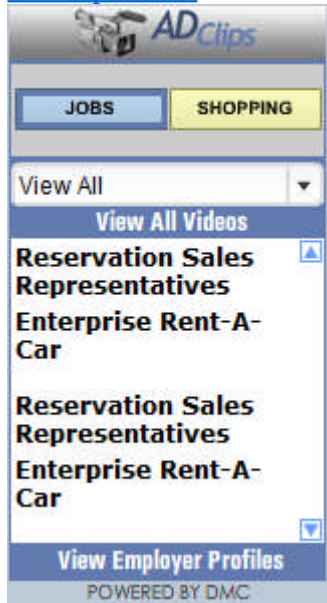
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The screenshot shows the ADClips website interface. At the top, there is a logo for ADClips and two tabs: 'JOBS' and 'SHOPPING'. Below the tabs is a dropdown menu set to 'View All'. Underneath, there is a link for 'View All Videos'. The main content area displays two identical job listings for 'Reservation Sales Representatives' at 'Enterprise Rent-A-Car'. At the bottom of the screenshot, there is a link for 'View Employer Profiles' and a note that the site is 'POWERED BY DMC'.

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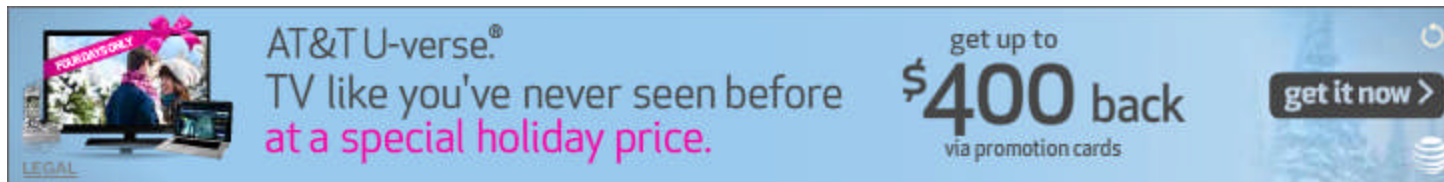
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